



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS
CATHOLIC CHURCH • BARTOW, FL
DIOCESE OF ORLANDO

ST. THOMAS ANNOUNCEMENTS

March 1, 2026

1. **PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR PEACE IN THE UKRAINE AND ISRAEL.**

2. **The obligation to participate in the Eucharist in person on Sundays and other holy days of obligation was restored on Palm Sunday 2022.** Regular attendance at Mass is what fulfills God's commandment to "Keep holy the Sabbath Day". Our world is hurting. We all need healing yet many of us are separated from the source of our strength. Jesus Christ invites us to return to the source and summit of our faith: his Real Presence in the Eucharist.

3. Our Parish bulletin can be viewed weekly online by clicking on the Bulletin button on our website at www.stthomasbartow.org. There is also a button to view the previous week's bulletin if you missed it. If you do not have access to the internet, please let the office know, and copies can be printed. If you look at the bulletin on your phone, you can add an icon to your homepage by doing the following steps for an iphone.
1. Do a search for stthomasbartow.org. 2. When the page opens, Click (touch) the small square with an arrow pointing up on the bottom of the screen. **3. Scroll** down and (touch "Add to Home Screen". **4. Click (touch)** "Add" in the upper right-hand corner. The next time you want to view the website, you only have to touch the new icon on your home page screen. If you need help finding the website or creating the icon on your phone, call the office or stop in the narthex after Mass for help. If you have an Android phone, please call the office for directions.

4. To subscribe to Bishop John Noonan's E-Scroll, news from the Diocese of Orlando go to www.orlandodiocese.org/e-scroll/. Just provide your name and email address.

5. Fr. Blake Britton, a priest in our Diocese, who is now at the Pontifical Institute of St. John Paul II in Washington DC for further studies, has written a book, *Reclaiming Vatican II, What It (Really) Said, What It Means, and How It Calls Us to Renew the Church*. If you would like to purchase the book, click on the following link: <https://books.wordonfire.org/reclaimingvaticanii>

6. Bishop Robert Barron, author, speaker, theologian and founder of Word on Fire, a global media ministry, is producing a seven volume Bible series. Volume I focuses on the Gospels, Volume II on Acts, Letters, and Revelation, Volume III, on The Pentateuch, Volume IV on The Promised Land and Volume V on Exile and Return. All are all available now at <https://wordonfire.org/bible>. Volume VI The Wisdom Literature and will be released at a later date. If you would like to subscribe to Bishop Barron's newsletter, go to <https://wordonfire.org/#newsletter> and just provide your email address.

7. In honor of Mother Angelica, foundress of EWTN catholic television network, please consider a gift of \$10, \$20, or \$25 per month or any amount you choose.

Catholic Trivia

What is the significance of the number 40 in Holy Scripture? The significance of the number 40 runs throughout the Bible! One question probably continues to pop up: “Why is Lent so long?” Why is it 40 days? The answer lies deep in Scripture, where the number 40 appears again and again. In the Bible, 40 is the number of preparation before something new. It marks a period of purification before renewal, of struggle before mission, of surrender before promise. Lent follows this ancient pattern.

One of the earliest and most dramatic examples is the flood in Genesis. Rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights upon the earth. This seems like destruction, but the flood was also a cleansing. Corruption and violence had overtaken humanity, and through those 40 days the world was washed clean. When the waters receded, God established a covenant with Noah; and thus a new beginning emerged from this time of trial! The key here is that the 40 days were not meaningless suffering; they were preparation for renewal. We see the same pattern in the story of Israel’s 40 years in the desert. After God freed His people from slavery in Egypt, they did not immediately enter the Promised Land. Instead, they wandered. The desert was a place of testing. Hunger exposed their complaints. Thirst revealed their fears. Hardship uncovered their longing to return to slavery rather than trust God. Yet it was in the wilderness that they learned dependence. God fed them with manna from heaven and water from the rock. He formed them into a people who knew His law and relied on His providence. The desert stripped away false security and shaped them into a nation ready to receive the promise. Forty years transformed former slaves into God’s covenant people, fully prepared and on fire to do His will.

Then we come to Our Lord Himself. Before beginning His public ministry, Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness. There, He faced temptation from the devil. He experienced hunger and isolation. Where Israel had failed in the desert, Christ remained faithful. He resisted the temptation to turn stones into bread, to test God, to grasp earthly power. After those 40 days of preparation through self-denial and union with the Father, He emerged ready to proclaim the Kingdom. His ministry was prepared in silence and sacrifice. Other biblical moments echo the same meaning. Moses spent 40 days on Mount Sinai before receiving the Law. The prophet Jonah warned Nineveh that it had 40 days to repent before destruction. Again and again, 40 marks a merciful space: time to be purified, time to turn back, time to prepare for what God is about to do next.

This is why Lent lasts 40 days. The Church is not being arbitrary, but deliberately placing us within a biblical rhythm. 40 days is long enough to stretch us, to expose our attachments, and to reveal how much we rely on comforts instead of God. But 40 days require something deeper than willpower. They require surrender. Over time, fasting begins to uncover what controls us. Extra prayer reveals how distracted we are. Acts of charity challenge our self-protection. The number 40 tells us that trial is not pointless. It is purposeful. In Scripture, 40 never stands alone. After 40 comes renewal. After the flood comes the covenant. After the desert comes the Promised Land. After Christ’s 40 days comes the proclamation of the Gospel. And after Lent comes Easter. When the days feel long, remember: this is what 40 does. It clears away what is unnecessary and readies the heart for resurrection!